

A little more than two years ago, on December 8th, 2009, I stood before the Michigan Senate to tell my story at a different hearing on gun laws. I was working nights at the American Red Cross and taking morning classes, trying to earn a master's degree in medical science at the Wayne State University School of Medicine. Some members of the faculty were suggesting that I should join the Ph.D. program, others told me that I was a shoe-in for the M.D. program. Unfortunately, I had recently been "caught" with a concealed pistol on campus. There didn't seem to be many people who cared that I had broken absolutely no laws or that the subject had not been addressed in the university's code of conduct. My concealed pistol license and my concealed pistol were taken from me by the Wayne State police. The disciplinary action that the university was pursuing looked like it was most likely to be expulsion.

Fortunately I, like so many other people with concealed pistol licenses, had put forth the effort to learn all the laws and all the policies regarding the issue that I would need to know in order to conduct my affairs both legally and properly. I knew I had done absolutely nothing wrong, but it took ten months and four courtroom appearances before the state's prosecutor finally gave up and admitted that they had no grounds on which they could press charges. The university gave me probation and forced me to sign an agreement stating that I would not bring any more guns in to the university's buildings.

Since then I have joined the School of Medicine's Ph.D. program and I am currently doing research in molecular neuropharmacology. I still get good grades and work as hard as I did before. In fact, when I started writing this statement, it was after 10:00 pm and I had been in the building, working, for over 14 hours. Every day at work/school I remain disarmed and I have yet to hear a compelling reason why this should be the case.

If the argument in favor of my being disarmed is that I don't have enough training to be trusted with a gun at school, I should point out that in the past two years I have also received my NRA certifications as a chief range safety officer and as a pistol instructor. The training argument fails because I am trained well enough that the state of Michigan trusts me to teach the courses that allow other people to get their own concealed pistol licenses. If the argument is that I may misinterpret a situation and fire when unnecessary or that I may have a temper that will cause me to go on a shooting spree, I can give you a few select reasons why that argument also falls flat. Since last summer I have been attacked by a pit bull while visiting my parents, I dealt with an attempted carjacking, and I have talked my way out of a case of "mistaken identity" when two men who thought I was somebody else approached me in my yard, at night, during a power outage, while I was checking the roof of my home for storm damage, and very vulgarly threatened me with great bodily harm. In all three instances I was armed, but fired no shots. I am well aware that firearms are tools of last resort and should only be used in very specific circumstances. There are no "take backs" or "do overs" once the trigger is pulled, and that is a responsibility I take incredibly seriously.

In lieu of completely eliminating the pistol free areas on the books, I am happy to accept the proposal that further training would grant me exemption from them. Since I know that I am accountable for every bullet fired in a defensive situation, I do frequently spend time at the local shooting ranges making sure I can properly operate any gun I may choose to carry. Furthermore, I know a few other students, and faculty members, who own guns and have their own concealed pistol licenses. I have nothing but good things to say for their knowledge of safety, their respect for the sobriety of the subject, and their understanding that continuing practice is incredibly important. If I were to learn that any of them were carrying a concealed pistol, I certainly would not feel any less safe. After all, these are the same people I trust every day with toxic chemicals, radioactive chemicals, flammable chemicals, explosive chemicals, surgical tools, large quantities of anaesthetics, and federally regulated drugs. In my life, a person with a state-issued concealed pistol license really is the least of my worries.

Thank you for considering my opinions.



Daniel J. Huereca